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**CONTACT:**

William Pitman, Governor's Office

[william.pitman@state.ma.us](mailto:william.pitman@state.ma.us)

Felix Browne, Public Safety and Security

[Felix.browne@state.ma.us](mailto:Felix.browne@state.ma.us)



**Baker-Polito Administration Announces Mobilization of Massachusetts  
National Guard to Puerto Rico for Hurricane Response and Recovery**

*Puerto Rico accepts Massachusetts offer for specialized communications team*

**BOSTON** – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced Puerto Rico's official acceptance of an offer from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to mobilize a six person Massachusetts National Guard (MANG) communications unit to Puerto Rico for up to 30 days. The Joint Site Incident Satellite Communications Capability (JISCC) team will support satellite-based data and mobile communications on the island, where communication lines have been severely damaged.

"We are proud that members of the Massachusetts National Guard will mobilize to Puerto Rico to assist in the recovery operations on the island where lines of communications have been badly damaged," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "Massachusetts is ready and willing to offer additional support to Puerto Rico with personnel and equipment as requested and is preparing to welcome disaster survivors seeking temporary or permanent residence in Massachusetts. We will remain in contact with Puerto Rican officials and federal authorities throughout response and recovery efforts during this devastating time for all affected by Hurricanes Maria and Irma."

The request for assistance from Puerto Rico came through the Emergency

Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which is the national emergency management mutual aid system that facilitates state-to-state disaster assistance. A JISCC provides satellite-based Internet and radio capabilities to support interoperable civil-military communications. Multiple National Guard JISCCs from around the U.S. have been mobilized or are in the process of mobilizing to Puerto Rico to support disaster relief operations. The mission is officially accepted and travel details, including the mobilization date, are being organized by the Massachusetts National Guard.

“The mobilization of this specialized National Guard team from Massachusetts will provide direct support to recovery operations and the citizens of Puerto Rico during this trying time,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito**. “As we prepare to help with relief efforts for Puerto Rico and those residents who choose to self-evacuate to Massachusetts through the Massachusetts United for Puerto Rico Fund, we will continue to monitor requests for emergency assistance, and urge everyone looking to help to support disaster relief operations through cash donations listed on the state’s website.”

“In recent years, Massachusetts emergency response personnel have been mobilized to states across the nation to assist in the aftermath of all manner of natural disasters,” **said Secretary of Public Safety Dan Bennett**. “We are proud to continue this tradition by sending personnel to Puerto Rico and thank the emergency management personnel who represent the finest ideals of service to others.”

"The Massachusetts National Guard is committed to building enduring relationships with all our national and state partners. Our service members are prepared to assist and maximize transparency of Department of Defense and Commonwealth of Massachusetts National Guard activities in response to these tragic hurricanes that have struck Puerto Rico," **said Major General Gary Keefe, Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard**. "We are honored to offer our personnel and resources in this critical time of need and anticipate future mission taskings as we help the citizens of Puerto Rico recover from the devastation caused by these hurricanes."

“EMAC is a key component of our national emergency management enterprise,” **said MEMA Director Kurt Schwartz**. “We have used EMAC many times to bolster our disaster response and recovery operations in Massachusetts, and as we did for Texas after Hurricane Harvey, we are able to support Puerto Rico as it deals with the impacts of these powerful storms.”

MEMA is preparing an additional EMAC offer to Puerto Rico of bilingual law enforcement officers. Further details will be provided when and if the offer is

accepted by Puerto Rico. MEMA continues to monitor the EMAC system and look for opportunities to offer personnel, equipment and resources to Puerto Rico.

Earlier today, Governor Baker, Mayor Martin J. Walsh, Representative Jeffrey Sánchez and members of the Boston Foundation [announced](#) the [Massachusetts United for Puerto Rico Fund](#) to support and respond to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricanes Maria and Irma. The fund has been formed in partnership with the Latino Legacy fund and in cooperation with the Alliance for Puerto Rico. Funds raised will be distributed for reconstruction and relief on the island of Puerto Rico and to support self-evacuees arriving in Massachusetts from Puerto Rico for temporary or permanent residence.

Additionally, the Baker-Polito Administration [yesterday announced](#) the formation of a task force that will ensure that the state is prepared to support the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico for individuals who chose to self-evacuate the island and seek temporary or permanent residence in Massachusetts. State officials remain in communication with the Government of Puerto Rico and federal authorities and are ready and willing to offer emergency assistance, such as personnel and equipment, at the request of Puerto Rico.

#### **Volunteers, Donations:**

- **Donations** - Donating cash to recognized disaster relief organizations is the best way to help people in need after a disaster. Cash donations are efficient, flexible to use, and require no transportation. Consider donating to the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, or other disaster relief organization that is a member of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD): <https://www.nvoad.org/current-disasters/werespond/>
- **Volunteers** – Those looking to volunteer are encouraged to get involved with an established disaster relief organization. This ensures that volunteer efforts are coordinated and that the needs of disaster communities and survivors are met. People are asked not to self-deploy to a disaster area. Information on volunteering is available through the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD): <https://www.nvoad.org/current-disasters/werespond/>

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